

THE REASONS CITED BY LATINO STUDENTS FOR THEIR DISCONTINUATION IN  
BAND AFTER THE FIRST YEAR

By

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to determine the reasons cited by Latino students for their discontinuation in band after the first year of instruction. Participants ( $N = 10$ ) were middle school students enrolled in the Olathe Public School District in Olathe, Kansas. Using a phenomenological approach, data were collected through two focus group sessions led by the researcher. Focus groups were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a two-cycle coding process. Findings indicate that students attribute five primary themes to their discontinuation in band after the first year: Personal Cost, Social Cost, Monetary Cost, Denial of Choice, and Teacher Effectiveness. The first three themes, Personal, Social, and Monetary Cost, were examined through the lens of Eccles's Expectancy-Value Theory Framework (1983). The fourth theme, Denial of Choice, is discussed as it relates to the idea of Autonomy versus Control in education. The fifth theme, Teacher Effectiveness, addresses issues related to classroom management, the student/teacher relationship, and teaching methods. Recommendations are presented to assist educators with their Latino student retention efforts.

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## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

Two critical areas of discussion amongst instrumental class music educators and a frequented area of research are the topics of retention and attrition. For over a century, the National Association for Music Education's (NAfME) mission has been to advocate for and support music education in the public schools. Their preamble states, "Every individual should be guaranteed the opportunity to learn music and to share in musical experiences" (NAfME, 2011). Despite best efforts put forth by educators and organizations such as NAfME, attrition in instrumental music programs continues to be especially high between the first and second years of instrumental class music instruction. Numerous researchers have observed that some subgroups of students discontinue their participation in instrumental music at higher rates than others, most notably the Latino population (Lorah, Sanders, & Morrison, 2014; Abril, 2011; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007). The Latino population, a population quickly growing in the United States (Caudillo & Fernandez, 2014), has received relatively little focus in the research on retention and attrition in instrumental music as compared to non-minority groups. Researchers have found that Latino populations participate less frequently than their peers in extra curricular activities, including performing ensembles (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007), due to issues related to socioeconomic status (SES), academic achievement, language and cultural barriers, and a lack of resources both at home and at the school (Lorah, Sanders, & Morrison, 2014; Klinedinst, 1991). Researchers, however, have yet to examine Latino students' perceptions regarding classroom instrumental music participation, or ask Latino students why they choose not to participate in instrumental music classes. Further research is needed in this area to identify any barriers to participation in instrumental music classes Latino students may face.

It is the belief of NAFME and music educators across the country that all students are entitled to a quality music education. One of NAFME's primary goals is to help promote quality music education by advocating for resources, teacher training, and music programs across the country (NAFME, 2011). Advocates have long studied the non-musical benefits of music education in both academic and social/behavioral areas (Forgeard, Winner, Norton, & Schlaug, 2008; Gardner, 2000; Peard, 2012). These and other positive effects of music training have been found to persist into adulthood even after music instruction has stopped (Skoe & Kraus, 2012).

NAFME developed nine standards in 1994 that educators used for years, until most recently when a new set of national standards was developed (Shuler, 2014). To accompany the new national standards for mathematics and English/language arts, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) adopted a new set of national standards for the arts (NCCAS, 2015). This transition is representative of the new place of music and the arts in our schools as part of the core curriculum for students. With the copious years of support in place, it is imperative for educators to uphold the NAFME preamble which states; "... every individual should be guaranteed the opportunity to learn music and share in musical experiences," no matter their race, SES, or previous academic achievement level (NAFME, 2011).

Despite the work of NAFME and countless educators, student attrition persists as a major problem among band programs. Klinedinst (1991) identified five variables that predict retention after the first year of instrumental music instruction. Among these factors were socio-economic status (SES) and academic achievement (see also Kinney, 2010; Marshall & Corenblum, 1998). Additionally, parent involvement, source of instrument (Moyer, 2010; Martignetti, 1965), and family structure (Kinney, 2010) have also been found to play a major role in student retention, as each factor is a significant predictor of enrollment. Additional variables include starting grade,



school organization (Hartley, 1996), ensemble type, instruction methods employed (Gamin, 2005), conflicts between other activities, the director, and time spent after school (Rogers, 1989). Factors relating to student mindsets have also been studied such as loss of interest, and diminished motivation (Martignetti, 1965; Costa-Giomi, 2004). Among the myriad of students who choose not to continue in band are Latino students, who have been identified to participate at significantly lower rates than their white peers in music ensemble classes (Abril, 2011).

The Latino population comprises any person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or Columbian decent, as well as a host of other nationalities found in Latin America. The term is often used interchangeably with Hispanic, Chicano, or Mexican (Caudillo, & Fernandez, 2014; Book, 2013). In the United States, over half the Latino population lives in California, Texas, and Florida (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011). The Midwest also houses a substantial portion of the remaining US Latino population, which has seen tremendous growth between 2000 and 2010, a trend which is projected to continue (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011). In the Kansas City area, nearly 25% of all elementary school students are Latino (Caudillo & Fernandez, 2014). This growing population trend has crucial implications for the topic of band student retention. It is vital that educators consider the strategies and methods they are using to reach Latino students in their classrooms.

Across all extra curricular activities, Latino students have been found to participate at lower rates than their peers (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007). In music ensembles, there exists a dramatic over representation of white students by the senior year (Abril, 2011). Abril (2011) found race/ethnicity, SES, and native language to be significant predictors of student participation in music ensembles. In a study on tenth-grade participants, Lorah and colleagues (2014) suggested that a “lack of opportunity” rather than interest caused English Language

Learning (ELL) students not to participate. Some of this lack of opportunity stems from English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, which have an initial positive impact, especially for recent immigrants, but can be academically detrimental over extended periods of time (Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010). Students enrolled in ESL courses often do not have the opportunity to take music classes as they frequently are placed at conflicting times (Abril, 2015). For these reasons, current methods to keep students involved in instrumental music classes may not be serving the Latino population. The reasons cited by students for their discontinuation in instrumental music classes would help provide valuable insight for addressing these issues in a growing population.

The purpose of this study is to determine what reasons sixth-grade Latino students attribute to their decisions not to enroll in band after participating in band during their fifth-grade year. The following research questions guided the inquiry: 1) What factors influence Latino students' decisions to discontinue participation in band programs? 2) Are there any patterns among the factors reported by students that could help elementary band directors to better serve their Latino populations?

Four criteria were used to randomly select participants in the Olathe public school district: grade level, home language, ethnic/racial identification, and participation in fifth grade band. Students had to be enrolled in sixth grade, speak Spanish in the home, identify as Hispanic, and have been enrolled in fifth-grade band but not in sixth to meet all research criteria.

Participants for the study were selected at random from the pool of qualifying students.

This study took a phenomenological approach as described by Creswell (2013), and utilized a series of focus groups comprised of Latino students who chose not to participate in band during their sixth-grade year after participating in fifth-grade band classes (Kruger &

Casey, 2000). Data was analyzed utilizing the first and second-cycle coding methods with an inductive approach as described by Miles and Huberman (2014). A reliability check was performed by an expert coder, coding 20% of the data with at least 80% reliability.

**Operational Definitions:**

Attrition: The rate at which students do not continue on into their second year of band after completing their first year.

Retention: The rate at which students continue on into their second year of band after completing their first year.

Socio-economic status (SES): The complex combination of education, power, and resources that separate different classes in our society (Bornstein & Bradley, 2003). In this study, low SES refers to families participating in the school's free- and reduced-lunch program.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **Review Of Literature**

There has been a substantial amount of research conducted on attrition and retention in instrumental music ensembles. Multiple authors present strategies for improving retention in ensembles, as well as the reasons cited by educators, parents, and students for attrition. The following chapter reviews the literature related to the non-musical benefits of music education, the factors related to attrition and retention, the Latino population in the United States, Kansas, and the public education system, and the barriers that prevent Latino students from participating in instrumental music at the same rates as their peers.

#### **Non-musical Benefits of Music Education**

There has been a tremendous amount of research conducted showing the non-musical benefits of music education from a cognitive, behavioral, and social perspective. Benefits such as these are integral to the arguments made by music education advocates and are often included in advocacy claims for public school music education. With regards to the cognitive benefits, a tremendous amount of research has been conducted linking the study of music to early neurological development. Auditory discrimination, language skills, verbal memory, and positive increases in brain plasticity have all been linked to the study of music (Forgeard, Winner, Norton, & Schlaug, 2008; Tierney, Krizman & Kraus, 2015; Skoe & Kraus, 2012; Jakobson, Cuddy & Kilgour, 2003). Correlations have also been found between music study and achievements on math and English proficiency tests (Johnson & Memmott, 2006).

Beyond the realm of cognitive development, music education has also been shown to positively impact social and behavioral development. Participation in music performance develops "...skills such as organization, time management, and self-discipline" (McCorkle,

2014, p. 26), all of which are skills that can be generalized outside of the music classroom.

Furthermore, Gardiner (2000) found positive behavioral associations between music training and classroom participation, following directions, and cooperating with teachers and peers. These classroom-oriented skills can also lead to an increase in positive personal skills, such as self-motivation, self-esteem, responsibility, initiative, leadership, and communication (Gardiner, 2000; Peard, 2012). Music participation also has a positive impact on students' emotional health, self-esteem, and identification (Goopy, 2013; McCorkle, 2014; Rickard et al., 2013).

All of these areas are critical for students to develop in order to support their academic achievement and social growth. From this standpoint, music instruction becomes a significant tool for honing crucial skills and generalizing them into classroom settings and larger society.

### **Factors of Attrition and Retention**

Attrition refers to the rate at which students discontinue participation in an activity. In the present study, the researcher focuses specifically on students who discontinue participation in band after the first year of instruction. Attrition and retention are continually being researched in music education to provide educators with the knowledge and resources needed to better serve their students and schools. One of the earliest studies to examine attrition in instrumental music was conducted by Martignetti (1965). Martignetti surveyed directors, and interviewed parents and students who dropped out of elementary instrumental music programs during their fourth-grade year of instruction. The most common reasons cited by students who dropped out of instrumental music were related to the perceived difficulty of the instrument. Parents believed the primary factor to be a lack of practice time at home; while educators indicated a loss of interest and lack of parental support at home. Lack of money for supplies or instrument rental was not cited as a major issue for any of the parties interviewed (Martignetti, 1965).

Rogers (1989) also sought to determine the influences on students' decisions to drop out of band. This study examined the levels of music achievement between graduating high school seniors participating in band and those who participated, but dropped out, before graduation. The most prevalent reasons cited by dropouts were conflicts with other activities, academics or scheduling, conflicts with the director, the after-school time required, dissatisfaction with their musical progress, and peer pressure. Over half the students involved in the study dropped out of band between eighth and ninth grade.

In a more recent study, Gamin (2005) randomly surveyed 51 instrumental music teachers to examine educators' views as to what factors influenced students' decisions to drop out of instrumental music during the first year of instruction in instrumental ensemble classes. Results were then compared to first-year retention rates, ensemble type, scheduling method, and demographic area. Gamin (2005) identified an unwillingness to spend time practicing, poor academic performance, and perceived instrument difficulty as major predictors of attrition. Factors such as perceived difficulty and fear of failure were more influential on dropout rates than lack of musical aptitude. He also found that conflicts with other activities were not a factor in elementary school instrumental music programs, despite contributing to attrition in older age groups (Rogers, 1989). In addition, programs that pulled students out of regular class for instrumental music instruction had higher attrition rates than those with a dedicated lesson time.

Klinedinst (1991) conducted another groundbreaking study on attrition and retention. Klinedinst examined 11 variables to determine if they predicted student achievement, teacher rating, progress, and retention in instrumental music ensembles after the fifth-grade year. Three judges evaluated student achievement. Findings indicated that scholastic ability, reading achievement, and math achievement maintained the strongest relationships to adjudicator and

teacher ratings of performance achievement. Socio-economic status (SES), self-concept in music, reading and math achievement, and scholastic ability predicted retention in music education programs.

Kinney (2010) corroborated Klinedinst's findings by specifically looking at the ability of academic achievement, SES, family structure, mobility, ethnicity, and gender to predict students' enrollment and retention in middle school band programs in an urban setting. Kinney found that academic achievement and family structure were significant predictors of initial enrollment. Regarding retention, higher academically achieving students and students from two-parent/guardian homes were more likely to begin and persist in band, as were females and students from higher SES backgrounds. Kinney duplicated these results after expanding the study to include orchestra, choral, and band programs (Kinney, 2015). Results supported Kinney's previous work (2010) and revealed significant differences between band, orchestra, and choir programs in regards to predicting enrollment and retention. Student participation in bands, orchestras, and choirs was predicted by academic achievement in math and reading. Math achievement was found to only be a predictor of instrumental music retention. Reading achievement predicted retention in both instrumental and choral ensembles.

Marshall and Corenblum (1998) examined the effects of SES, school achievement, attitude towards music, musical interests, and success attribution on students intentions to continue pursuing instrumental music. Participants of this study included 253 ninth-grade students participating in band programs. The study found that SES, perceived parental support, and outside musical interests were the strongest predictors of students' intentions to continue on in band after ninth-grade. Teacher evaluations were also found to predict intentions to continue the study in instrumental music. Students who were evaluated positively were also more likely to

enroll in band the following year. The most important factors that predicted intentions to continue in instrumental music were SES, teacher evaluations, and the perceived attitudes of important individuals in the students' lives such as family, teachers and other influential persons. Marshall stated, "People will pursue those activities for which they are rewarded by important people in their lives," which aligns well with motivational theories (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Skinner, 1971).

Nierman and Veak (1997) also found motivation, attitudes towards music and the influence of other significant persons to be highly influential and a predictor of student participation and retention in beginning instrumentalists. Rather than examining demographic data, Nierman and Veak chose to analyze the differences between two different recruitment strategies: recorder instruction and videos/performances of musicians. SES was controlled between the two groups. A major focus in the study was the relationship between attitude towards music and musical aptitude. The study found that the treatments—recorder instruction, and videos/performances of musicians—had no effect on the attitudes towards music of the students involved. After controlling SES participation rates, results showed that the control group had significantly higher attitudes towards music, especially in the lower and middle SES groups. This finding suggests that there are multiple factors involved in student decisions to participate that may not be controlled in school, such as the influence of peers, family, and significant others. These findings have also been found by other researchers to be significant predictors of participation and retention (Nierman & Veak, 1997; Marshall & Corenblum, 1998).

Much like Nierman and Veak (1997), Albert (2006) also looked at recruitment strategies alongside retention. The two questions he sought to answer were as follows: 1) What are the strategies used for recruitment by teachers and schools that serve low SES populations, and 2)



what are the strategies used to improve retention by teachers and school that serve low SES populations. With regards to the first question, exposure was found to be the primary recruiting tool. Usage of concerts, apparel, and instrument petting zoos were common. For retention, maintaining positive relationships between the students and teacher, and creating a positive classroom environment were the most significant factors contributing to student retention in instrumental music programs. Many of the teachers and administrators interviewed also cited proactive teacher strategies, culturally relevant ensembles, and student ownership of the ensemble processes as aids in recruitment and retention (Albert, 2006).

Another motivation- and retention-based study examined fourth-grade piano students. Costa-Giomi (2004) examined the predictors that led 64 fourth-grade students to drop out of piano lessons and found motivation to be a large factor in retention. The study found no significant demographic differences between children who dropped out of lessons and those who continued through the duration of the study. Those who dropped out missed more lessons, practiced less, completed less piano homework, and scored lower on their piano exams than their peers who remained in piano lessons. Teachers indicated that students who dropped out of piano lessons during the study achieved less in the first six weeks of piano lessons than other children. Teachers also met less often with the parents of students who dropped out of lessons. Researchers determined that the students who dropped out of lessons had lower motivation and diminished achievement on the instrument than the students who persisted throughout the study.

Moyer (2010) found significant relationships between instrument source, condition, and parent involvement and retention in band programs. The study focused on three variables, parent involvement, instrument source, and instrument condition. The study also controlled for SES. Moyer examined 1687 students attending 19 schools across 9 states. Similar to research cited in

the paragraphs above, findings from this study support financial investment as a strong predictor of retention. In this study, students who used school-owned instruments were less likely to continue in instrumental music ensembles than their peers who rented or purchased an instrument. Furthermore, the study suggests that students using school-owned instruments were not only found to have less parental involvement, but were also more likely to drop out of band classes. School owned instruments, commonly older and often in disrepair, were not as attractive to students. Contrary to many texts on teaching instrumental music and recruitment (Dvorak, 2001; Hamann & Gillespie, 2004; Mixon, 2005), which suggest fixing instrumentation problems by having students switch to school owned instruments, Moyer states that providing instruments is not an effective way to retain students in instrumental music ensembles. Moyer instead suggested that some sort of payment system for school-owned instruments might help to increase parent involvement and lead to higher retention rates (Moyer, 2010).

Hartley (1996) looked at two predictors for instrumental music retention: starting grade and school organization. Grades examined were fifth- and sixth-grade classes and school organization referred to schools that hold fifth- and sixth-grade classes in the same building and those that separate them. No significant difference in initial enrollment was found between schools that began instrumental instruction in fifth or sixth grade. Hartley and Porter duplicated these same results 13 years later (2009). It was found that lower grade levels see higher retention rates throughout the year, but by seventh grade there was no difference in retention rates (Hartley, 1996). In Hartley and Porter's (2009) study, they found retention into seventh grade to be positively correlated with the starting grade of string instrument instruction. Students who started string instruction in sixth grade were more likely to enroll again in seventh grade than students who began instruction in fifth grade. Despite slight differences in populations, these two

studies demonstrated correlations between starting grade and retention into seventh grade instrumental music classes.

In summary, the primary indicators of retention, as supported by research, are high SES, high parental involvement, positive relationships, high academic achievement, and a positive self-concept of music aptitude (Albert, 2006; Costa-Giomi, 2004; Gamin, 2005; Kinney, 2010, 2015; Klinedinst, 1991; Marshall & Corenblum, 1998; Moyer, 2010; Nierman & Veak, 1997). The primary indicators of attrition, as cited in the research, are low SES, low parental involvement, low motivation and practice, and a negative self-concept of musical aptitude (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Gamin, 2005; Kinney, 2010, 2015; Martignetti, 1965; Nierman & Veak, 1997; Rogers, 1989). The Latino population often carries with it these attrition predictors, and has been found to participate less frequently in band programs.

### **The Latino Population**

The term, Latino, is often used synonymously in research with Hispanic and refers to individuals who come from Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico, the Caribbean islands, and numerous other South and Central American regions (Book, 2013; Caudillo & Fernandez, 2014). Book notes that others utilize terms such as Latino, Chicano, and Mexican to refer to the same group of people. This research uses the term Latino to refer to students who identify as Hispanic during enrollment or indicate Spanish as the primary language spoken in their home. The Latino population is a fast-growing ethnic group in the United States. A little over half of the Latino population in the United States lives in California, Texas, and Florida. Between 2000 and 2010, the Latino population grew by 49% in the Midwest, the largest growth area in the country (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011).

The city of Olathe, Kansas went through a “building boom” during the 1990s that began the very large population shift in the Hispanic community in Olathe (Book, 2013 p. iii). In 2014, the median age for the Hispanic population in the Kansas City Metro was 25, only 50% owned homes and less than 70% were citizens (Caudillo & Fernandez, 2014). Today nearly 25% of elementary school students in the Kansas City metro area are Latino, and represent a very young and quickly growing demographic.

Latino students are often involved in education programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, which occur during the school day and often conflict with instrumental music classes. Thomas and Collier (2001) conducted a study to determine the long-term academic effects of a variety of immersion styles for language minority students. Participants in their study were primarily Latino, although the study did include other language minority groups. The study focused on 90-10 and 50-50 one-way<sup>1</sup> and two-way<sup>2</sup> developmental bilingual education programs. The 90-10 and 50-50 programs refer to the amount of instruction that is provided in the native language and English. Typically students in Kindergarten and the primary grades are initially taught 90% in Spanish and 10% in English. Students then gradually move toward 50% Spanish 50% English instruction by the time they are in fourth or fifth grade (Howard, Sugarman, Perdomo, & Adger, 2005). In developmental bilingual education programs, students continue their education in both languages into secondary school (Thomas & Collier 2001). Thomas and Collier found that enrichment 90-10 and 50-50 one-way and two-way developmental bilingual education programs are the only programs that exist to assist students in

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<sup>1</sup> In one-way programs, students who share a common language are taught in their native language and English (Thomas & Collier, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> In two-way programs, both non-English and native-English speakers are combined into the same class. This allows students to be grouped together for core subjects as well as classes such as physical education and music (Howard, Sugarman, Perdomo & Adger, 2005)

reaching the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in both their native language and in English. Oftentimes, they were able to reach even higher levels of academic achievement when this program was implemented. In addition, researchers found that students only benefitted if they were enrolled in at least 4 years of schooling in their primary language, and should not be fully immersed before that point.

Equally important to trends in English Language Learner (ELL) and Latino education are attitudes of Latino students towards education. Brown (2008) sought to determine the differences in participation patterns and perceptions of teaching between Anglo-American and Latino students at a large university. His study identified many differences in the ways Latino and Anglo-American students view classroom participation and educational strategies. For example, Latino students tend to give group solidarity priority over individual achievement in the classroom. Additionally, it was very important to Latino students that others should not be left out when groups are assigned. Brown (2008) also determined that Latino students felt those students actively participating in class were showing off for the teacher, or that participation might increase if the teacher came from a similar background as they did. For Latino students, the interpretation of success included community and familial aspects, and was not limited to the financial, academic, and professional realms (Brown, 2008).

These differences, many of which are cultural in nature (Brown, 2008), are all important when considering the growth of the Latino population in our schools, as currently Latino students participate in music ensembles at lower rates than other students (Abril, 2011). Considering these cultural differences can help educators to better serve all populations in their schools.

## **Barriers to Participation and Retention Among Latino Students**

While these studies are few in number, they provide an important foundation for a discussion of the barriers to participation and retention that Latino students face. In an effort to provide insight on college recruitment, Walker and Hamann (1995) studied the participation intentions of 774 high school students, grades nine through twelve, to participate in college and university music classes. The study sought to determine the relationships between race, years of participation, type of class, and grade level, and whether students would major in music, participate in music classes, or play or sing in an ensemble at the college or university level. Hispanic students reported the lowest amount of interest in college music participation of all the ethnic groups studied. While this study looked at high school students, it is important to note that students who continued participating in music ensembles into and throughout high school felt strongly that it was important for them to continue to participate. These feelings towards music participation, as a result of involvement, are important for music educators trying to create lifelong learners in music.

Feldman and Matjasko (2007) examined the participation patterns of high school students and created six activity profiles: sports only, academic only, school only, performance only, multiple activity, and non-participation. Across all these profiles, they found that Latino students participated at lower rates than their peers. They suggest that some of the barriers Latino students face are related to language barriers and home responsibilities. Other researchers also cited these same barriers to participation (Borden, Perkins, Careton-hug, Stone, & Keith, 2006; Abril, 2003). Furthermore, Feldman and Matjasko found SES and academic achievement to be predictors of participation in instrumental music classes. These findings corroborate with previous research, which shows that students from lower SES backgrounds participate less often in academic and

extra curricular activities than students from higher SES backgrounds (Abril, 2011; Lorah, Sanders, & Morrison, 2014; Borden, Perkins, Careton-hug, Stone, & Keith, 2006; Klinedinst, 1991; Kinney, 2010, 2015; Marshall & Corenblum, 1998; Moyer, 2010).

In a national demographic profile of band, orchestra, and choir students, Abril (2011) found that 21% of all seniors in 2004 participated in music ensembles. Gender, race/ethnicity, SES, native language, parents' education, standardized test scores, and GPA were all significant predictors of ensemble participation. English Language Learners (ELLs), Hispanic students, students of low SES backgrounds, males, and students of parents holding a high school diploma or less were significantly underrepresented in music programs. This study showed that students participating in musical ensembles are not a representative subset of the U.S. population.

Looking deeper into ELL and non-ELL participation rates, Lorah, Sanders, and Morrison (2014) examined 15,011 United States tenth-grade students to estimate music ensemble participation rates for ELL and non-ELL students. The researchers suggested that a "lack of opportunity" rather than interest for ELL students was a primary factor contributing to the underrepresentation of ELL students in music ensembles after controlling for SES and academic achievement. Approximately 60% of the ELL students studied reported Spanish as being the home language making them an important subgroup for study.

Music classes provide a unique opportunity for English language learners, as students are typically mainstreamed into the music class rather than in a separate ESL music class (Abril, 2003). Abril discussed strategies for working with ELL students such as using hand signs or gestures, chant songs, and poetry. Teachers should communicate with students before and after class, maintain high expectations, as well as study and incorporate their culture into lessons (Abril, 2003). Unfortunately, students enrolled in ESL courses often never have the opportunity

to take music classes in middle and high school due to schedule conflicts with ESL courses (Callahan, Wilkinson & Muller, 2010). Callahan, Wilkinson, and Muller (2010) examined the sophomore and senior transcripts of 14,726 students and examined the effects of variables such as ESL placement, academic preparation and achievement, individual and family characteristics, parental involvement, prior achievement, and school characteristics. ESL courses were found to have an initial positive impact in the area of mathematics, especially for recent immigrants and students with relatively low English proficiency. Students who did not fit this profile, however, experienced negative effects, as long-term placement in ESL courses had a detrimental effect on academic achievement. Additionally, students enrolled in ESL coursework were often unable to enroll in academically rigorous classes as well as other electives, such as music ensembles (Callahan, Wilkinson & Muller, 2010).

In a study of participation in youth programs, Borden, Perkins, Careton-Hug, Stone, and Keith (2006) asked students why they participated in youth programs and why they believed others did not. In this study 67 Latino youths were asked what they believed influenced young peoples' decisions to participate, or not participate, in youth programs. All participants were Latino youths who were participating in out-of-school youth programs. The study utilized a series of focus groups to gather and code data. The top five reasons cited for participation were personal development/confidence, improving self/community, learning life skills, emotional regulation, and a safe haven/respice. The top five reasons cited for non-participation were related to home/school/work, lack of money/transportation, not liking the people who ran the program, external constraints, and safety issues. Some other issues cited were related to family/religious priorities as well as peers not being involved. This study is limited in its scope, as researchers did



not talk to youth outside of the activity. As it relates to band, one might expect to find a wider variety of responses due to the activity occurring during the school day.

Latino students participate in instrumental music classes at lower rates than their peers at all levels of instruction (Abril, 2011; Walker & Hamann, 1995). The most frequently examined predictors of participation relate to SES, family, and academic achievement, all of which are strongly correlated to instrumental music participation (Abril, 2011; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007). Cultural issues related to family, community, and social expectations are also related to lower participation rates among Latino students in instrumental music classes (Borden, Perkins, Careton-Hug, Stone, & Keith 2006; Brown, 2008). Finally, a lack of opportunity, rather than home resources, is a major barrier that is over looked for many students (Lorah, Sanders, & Morrison, 2014). ESL courses often contribute to this lack of opportunity (Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010). All these factors contribute to the lower participation rates among Latino students observed by educators and researchers.

## **Conclusion**

The growth of the Latino population in the Kansas City area makes it increasingly important for educators to change how they teach and relate to students. In reviewing previous research on attrition and retention in instrumental music programs, multiple reasons for attrition including lower SES, parental support, and student teacher relations have been cited by teachers, students, and parents (Abril, 2011; Lorah, Sanders, & Morrison, 2014; Borden, Perkins, Careton-Hug, Stone, & Keith, 2006; Klinedinst, 1991; Kinney, 2010, 2015; Marshall & Corenblum, 1998; Moyer, 2010). However, up to this point no research has been conducted to determine the specific reasons Latino students cite for their discontinuation in band classes after the first year of instruction. The purpose of this study is to determine what reasons sixth-grade Latino students

attribute to their decisions not to enroll in band after participating in band during their fifth-grade year. The following research questions guided the inquiry of this study. 1) What factors influence Latino students' decisions to discontinue participation in band programs? 2) Are there any patterns among the factors reported by students that could help elementary band directors to better serve their Latino populations?

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Method**

#### **Research Design**

This study took a phenomenological approach as described by Creswell (2013). Studies in phenomenology describe the meaning of a phenomenon as seen through the eyes of a group of people (Creswell, 2013). The present study looked at instrumental music attrition through the lens of Latino sixth-grade students. To do this, the researcher conducted a series of focus groups made up of five students, utilizing a single-category design until data saturation was reached (Krueger & Casey, 2000), as scheduling allowed. This resulted in the conducting of two focus groups. Principles of inductive research were followed to come to appropriate findings for the research questions and no predetermined codebook was utilized to code data during the present study.

Throughout the study, the researcher bracketed or suspended any biases, preconceptions, or experience in order to study the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Tufford & Newmand, 2012). This process occurred, and was imbedded, throughout the research process (Tufford & Newmand, 2012) as to increase validity throughout.

#### **The Researcher**

The researcher is a 27-year-old white-Caucasian male, who was raised in a democratic Jewish household. He attended the Olathe Public School District, where he studied trombone and participated in a wide variety of music courses and activities. He has lived in the Kansas City metropolitan area for the last 24 years. Upon graduating with a Bachelor of Music Education, he obtained his first position in music education teaching fifth-grade beginning band in the Olathe Public School District. During his last four years in Olathe he worked at multiple Title-I schools.

Title-I schools receive specific additional funding from the U.S. Department of Education to meet the needs of at-risk and low-income students. In Olathe, these schools often include high populations of Latino students, where the researcher strives to improve retention of the Latino population in instrumental music classes.

### **Sample**

The ten participants in this study were randomly selected from a homogeneous sample (Isaac & Michael, 1995) of 16 qualifying students in the Olathe Public School District using four criteria: grade level, home language, ethnic/racial identification, and participation in fifth-grade band. Students had to be enrolled in sixth-grade, speak Spanish in the home, identify as Hispanic, and have been enrolled in band during fifth grade but not in sixth grade. All students were enrolled in the sixth grade at one of eight middle schools in the Olathe School District. Demographics collected on students included age, gender, enrollment in free and reduced lunch program, instrument played in band, English fluency, and length of time in US, and class schedule.

### **Procedures**

After obtaining approval from the International Review Board, the researcher obtained permission to conduct research from the school district and participating schools. The researcher met with qualifying students to explain the purpose and procedures of the study. Verbal confirmation was acquired from students on two separate occasions to ensure they were comfortable speaking English during focus groups and that a translator would not be necessary. Confirmation was acquired initially at a first meeting with the students and again when focus groups began. Focus groups of five students were organized at middle schools that agreed to

participate in the study. A signed consent form sent home with participating students was used to obtain parental permission.

Interview questions were developed by the researcher utilizing the research of Borden et al. (2006), as well as recommendations made by Krueger and Casey (2000) as guidelines. Cognitive interviewing was used to validate the focus group questions (Beatty & Willis, 2007). Probing was utilized throughout interviews, and analysis was completed through recordings and transcripts of the interviews (Beatty & Willis, 2007). Supplemental notes taken during the interview were also used.

All focus groups were conducted at the participants' schools. A conference room with a table large enough for all participants and the researcher was utilized. Focus groups were conducted during the school day. Students participating were pulled from one class on the day they participated in the study. Participants and the researcher created name tents at the beginning of the session to ensure that everyone was identified by the proper name. Before the start of the focus group sessions, the researcher confirmed again with participants that they were comfortable speaking English, and that a translator was not needed. All participants indicated comfort and fluency with the English language.

Sessions were audio recorded with a Yeti Professional USB Microphone and a MacBook Pro utilizing the native GarageBand application. Participants were informed that audio recordings would be used to generate transcripts to accurately report all ideas, and that all names and identities would be protected.

## **Data Analysis**

In order to analyze data, transcripts were prepared by the researcher for each focus group. Data were then analyzed in MAXQDA12 using descriptive codes during the first-cycle of coding (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Codes were not developed with a start list but rather were developed during the analysis process, where nine codes were created (Miles & Huberman, 2014). During the second-cycle of coding, data were further sorted into five larger thematic categories (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

Reliability was checked during each cycle through an intercoder agreement (Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 2014). Throughout this process an expert coder coded 20% of the data with 80% reliability (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Results**

Seventy-four statements were extracted from two focus-group transcripts. Statements were categorized into five primary categories. Three of the five categories related to the perceived cost component within the Expectancy-Value Theory framework. A fourth category dealt with the issues of student autonomy versus control in education. The final category was teacher effectiveness and dealt with issues such as classroom management, the student/teacher relationship, and teaching methods. These categories and their associated themes and subcategories can be found in Table 4.1.

Cost is defined as the negative aspects associated with a task, such as fear of failure or success, effort, and lost opportunities as a result of participating in the task. If the cost of participating is higher than the value students place on an activity, they will be less likely to participate or more likely to discontinue participation (Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Denial of Choice considers the idea of student autonomy versus control in education. Researchers have found a lack of decision-making opportunities for students after the transition into junior high and middle schools despite students desiring more autonomy (Eccles et al., 1991; Feldlaufer & Midgley, 1987; Mac Iver & Reuman, 1988). Students' lack of autonomy results in decreases of perceived utility value in academic subjects, decreases in intrinsic motivation, and increases in school misbehavior (Eccles et al., 1991). In addition, research has found that giving students a choice in a variety of areas such as group, curriculum, assignment, or assessment increases positive behaviors and academic motivation (Birdsell, Ream, Syller & Zobott 2009; Eccles et al., 1993). When students are denied their choice to participate in band they tend to be less likely to pursue band ensemble classes in the future.

**Table 4.1** Themes and categories of student responses

Themes	Categories	Subcategories
Perceived Cost	Social Cost	Instrument Isolation Other Students
	Personal Cost	Not Enjoyable Instrument Logistics Effort Elective Preference
	Financial Cost	Financial Cost
Autonomy vs. Control	Denial of Choice	Denial of Choice
Teacher Effectiveness	Teacher Effectiveness	Teacher Effectiveness

### Social Cost

The first category within the theme of perceived cost is social cost. Social cost was defined as the impact that students' participation in band has on their relationships with peers in band ensemble class, other classes, and outside of class.

Uniquely contributing to the literature, the present study identified classroom peers as a social cost factor in a student's choice to continue participating in band after the fifth-grade year. In addition to observing the teacher, students also observed the behavior of their peers during class time. Behavior problems during band classes not only disrupt learning, but the desire for some students to continue participating in band. Maria (clarinet) indicated that she often became frustrated with the behaviors the teacher had to correct during class. "A lot of them were just messing around . . . they wouldn't even do anything [and] the teacher had to constantly tell them to stop." Maria also said the "other kids wouldn't pay attention and we had to stop a lot because they kept talking." Sofia (clarinet) indicated that she observed "other people laughing or doing other stuff while half of the other people were actually playing." Students "messing around" or engaging in off-task behavior creates a negative learning environment for some students. Julia



(percussion) said that students in her class “were always arguing” with the teacher. Peer behaviors, such as misbehaving or arguing with the teacher, tend to create an environment unsuitable for learning and undesirable or uncomfortable for some students.

Also unique to this study, instrument isolation emerged as a primary reason students did not continue in band. The subcategory instrument isolation deals with students being the “only one,” or one of very few students learning their chosen instrument in band class. In some cases, instrument isolation can also result when not all instruments are being represented in the band. David (baritone) commented, “I was the only one [who played baritone] . . . There were only three low brass, three percussion players, and a small group of three flute players. Everything was taken up by trumpets and [clarinets].” David further suggested, “a more wide spread variety of [instruments]. Instead of [people] playing two main instruments” would have been desirable. Participating with a “variety of instruments” is important to many students joining the school band.

### **Personal Cost**

The second category within the perceived cost theme is personal cost. The researcher has defined personal cost as the negative consequences participation in band has on the personal aspects of students’ middle-school experiences. Aspects of personal cost include the following: Being unwilling or unable to put in the effort required to learn the instrument; preference for other sixth-grade electives; not liking band or thinking it was boring; and logistics, which made playing the instrument difficult.

Ensemble attrition literature has identified effort as a major predictor of a student’s intentions to continue in instrumental music (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Gramin, 2005; Martignetti, 1996). Students who are unwilling to practice at home or focus during class time are often the

students who discontinue participation in instrumental music. Participants in the present study agreed, attributing laziness and a lack of effort to their successes and failures, as well as to those of other students in band class. Some of the participants felt they would have enjoyed the class more if they had worked harder, or been better at their instrument. Pablo (trombone) stated that he wished he “would have [gotten] better at the trombone.” Mateo (clarinet) also indicated he would have liked to have “changed how [he] played.” When asked what some of the reasons Latino students did not continue Julia said, “they’re lazy.” David also said that “they were lazy in band... and they would sit with [poor posture].” Sofia admitted to not trying her best during band class saying, “I thought I could maybe try harder, because I was like one of those people that was laughing.” Maria observed that the “[other students] just never practiced what the teacher said or anything.” Effort was the single most discussed category in both focus groups.

Elective preference and enrollment credit utilization emerged as a unique component during the present study. Participants indicated they were given an opportunity to choose from a wide variety of classes in the sixth grade. Subsequently, they left band to try other electives such as art, language, and technology classes. David stated, “when you get to middle school, you have a certain amount of credits that you can use, . . . since band takes up a whole credit, it takes away a lot of electives that you could do. So some kids want to do more electives that way they don’t keep on going with band.” Julia also indicated “the [enrollment] credits” as being a factor in Latino students’ decisions to enroll in band their sixth-grade year.

The second code under personal cost titled Not Enjoyable incorporated statements related to band being boring, or indications that there were aspects of the class that students did not like. It is significant to note that none of the participants thought band ensemble class was boring, rather they believed their peers thought it was boring. Mateo stated that he thought Latino

students did not continue in band because “they got a little bored.” Maria indicated that her peers just “didn’t pay attention, so they didn’t experience a lot, so they thought it was boring.”

Participants also indicated that boredom in band was an evolving perception that developed throughout the year. Sofia said, “some students thought band was fun to try at first but then after a while it got boring.” Pablo said, “most of the students in my classroom just got really bored and maybe just wanted to try something new.” Some participants’ responses dealt with specific activities done in class such as “band karate,” a reward system to encourage students to practice their instruments. Emily (clarinet) said, “we did this thing called karate band, we would get belts for every test we did and I didn’t like that.” David indicated that he felt some students “just gave up on it,” and that “some [students] just don’t like doing band.” Martignetti (1969) determined that loss of interest was a significant factor in student attrition in music programs. This finding stands true in the current study. If students are not positively engaged in band, they are less likely to want to participate.

The final subcategory of personal cost, instrument logistics, is a slightly more complex issue and is unique to the present study. This subcategory covers issues such as the weight of the instrument, sanitation, and the non-performance difficulties encountered due to the physical nature of the instrument. The weight of the instrument was often cited as an issue in relation to students taking the instrument home for practice. Julia thought the weight of the instrument was one of the worst parts about band, stating “once I wanted to take it home, I had to walk home, and it’s kind of far away... it was heavy.” Alongside instrument size and weight, participants perceived school-owned instruments as being dirty and unsanitary. Sofia said she thought her peers “didn’t want to borrow [the instrument] because they think it’s nasty.” Physical characteristics of the instruments were also considerations for the students. Sofia thought that

putting on and aligning the reed made playing the clarinet too difficult. She said, “it was really hard to put [the reed] on and if you moved it, it would [squeak].”

The breadth of instrument logistics is substantial and is a unique component to the research on attrition. The major components to instrument logistics include the physical characteristics of the instrument, such as weight, ease of putting together, and cleanliness. The present research suggests that these factors may make some students predisposed to discontinuing their participation in band. Future research in this area would be valuable to educators.

### **Financial Cost**

The category of financial cost included references to finances as a barrier to participation in band. Statements related to paying a monthly rental fee, borrowing a school-owned instrument, and more generalized financial constraints. “Borrowing the instrument” or not “have[ing] it” were brought up as being a barrier to participation in sixth grade. It should be noted that every student who participated in the two focus groups used a school-owned instrument during their fifth-grade year of band. Students in this particular school district were given the option of utilizing a school-owned instrument if there were financial constraints preventing them from participating in band during their fifth-grade year. Using a school-owned instrument, and the condition of that school-owned instrument, have been shown to be a negative predictor for retention in previous research (Moyer, 2010). Participants whose families had difficulty paying for the instrument referenced such financial constraints. Emily said, “my parents’ didn’t want to keep on paying every single month for the instrument.” Sofia said that one of the reasons Latino students did not continue in band was “because [they] couldn’t afford

the instrument and stuff.”. In some cases, these students referred only to the instrument, and in other cases they referred to the extra materials such as books, reeds, and other related items.

As previous research has suggested (Kinney, 2010, 2015; Klinedinst, 1991; Marshall and Corenblum, 1998), this study found SES to be a major predictor of retention in band ensemble classes. The combination of renting or purchasing an instrument and materials can be a barrier for lower SES families. This barrier is often more pronounced in Latino communities where families working lower paying jobs often earn below the median national income (Caudillo & Fernandez, 2014).

### **Denial of Choice**

The fourth category, denial of choice, includes issues relating to alternative required classes, and students who enrolled in band but were not put in the class. Both of these barriers represent the removal of the students’ choice to participate in band during sixth-grade and the loss of motivation to continue to pursue participation afterwards.

In several cases, participants wanted to enroll in band but could not due to other required coursework. Most often statements highlighted the “Reading-180” course taken by most sixth-grade students in the school district. Reading-180 is a course offered in the middle school intended to improve basic reading skills related to comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency (Olathe, 2016). This course conflicted with band for some students even if they did not need to take Reading-180 for the entire year. Emily mentioned that she “had to take Reading-180 for the first quarter,” which then made her ineligible to enroll in band ensemble class later on. Maria said “I didn’t necessarily quit; I didn’t have any more space on my schedule because I had Reading-180.” In other instances, participants were required to take English Language Learner classes, which conflicted with band. Emily indicated, “some kids that [don’t] speak enough

[English] have to take ELL, using one of your classes.” The amount of core classes required of students and school district curriculum, which sometimes included reading and ELL classes, was an issue for some students. Julia stated, “there were a lot of core classes that I needed to take and they took off band.” Enrollment conflicts with other academics have been found in previous research to be barriers to student participation (Rogers, 1989). These issues especially affect Latino students who often are enrolled in multiple language courses throughout their schooling.

### **Teacher Effectiveness**

Teacher effectiveness was the final theme revealed in the present study. Previous research has shown that teachers play a significant role in participants’ desire to participate in band. Poor classroom management, ineffective teaching, and negative relationships between teachers and their students play a significant role in a student's decision to discontinue participation in musical ensembles (Rogers, 1989). Building positive relationships with students and creating a positive classroom environment are well-acknowledged aspects of quality teaching, and overall student success. Albert (2006) and Marshall and Corenblum (1998) emphasize the need for positive classroom environments and positive student-teacher relationships to encourage continuation in band. The present study found similar results in that fifth-grade students’ decisions to enroll in band in sixth-grade may be influenced by overall teacher effectiveness. Mateo felt that the teacher was too “strict,” which he believed influenced his and other students’ decisions not to continue participating in band after the first year. Other participants felt their teachers were too lenient, and did not discipline the class enough. Sofia said that “the teacher was so nice that he didn’t like to tell people to pay attention” during instruction. These participant responses demonstrate how teachers and their various forms of

discipline and effectiveness can influence students' decisions to continue participation in band ensemble classes.

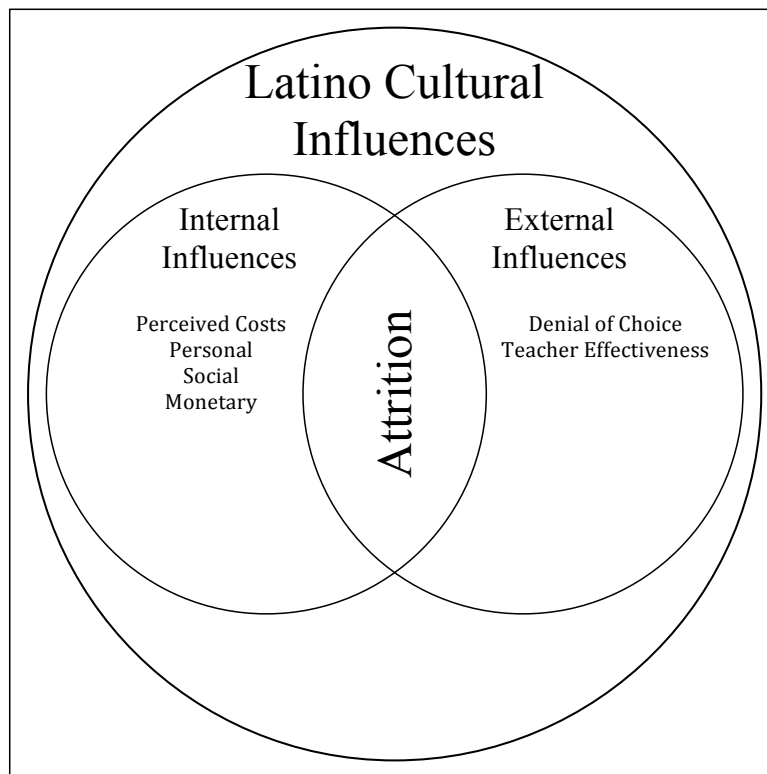
These ideas of cost, autonomy versus control, and teacher effectiveness begin to help us shape a theory on Latino student attrition after the first year of instruction in band ensemble classes. The following chapter will discuss the relationship between these ideas and student attrition in band classes.

## Chapter 5:

### Discussion

#### Furthering a Theoretical Perspective on Attrition

This study aimed to contribute to the body of research on music ensemble attrition, and begins to help researchers further a theory on Latino student attrition in musical ensembles. Such a theory relies on three main areas: internal influences, external influences, and culture. Figure 5.1 illustrates the relationships between these three components as revealed in the present study and how they relate with regards to attrition for the Latino student population.

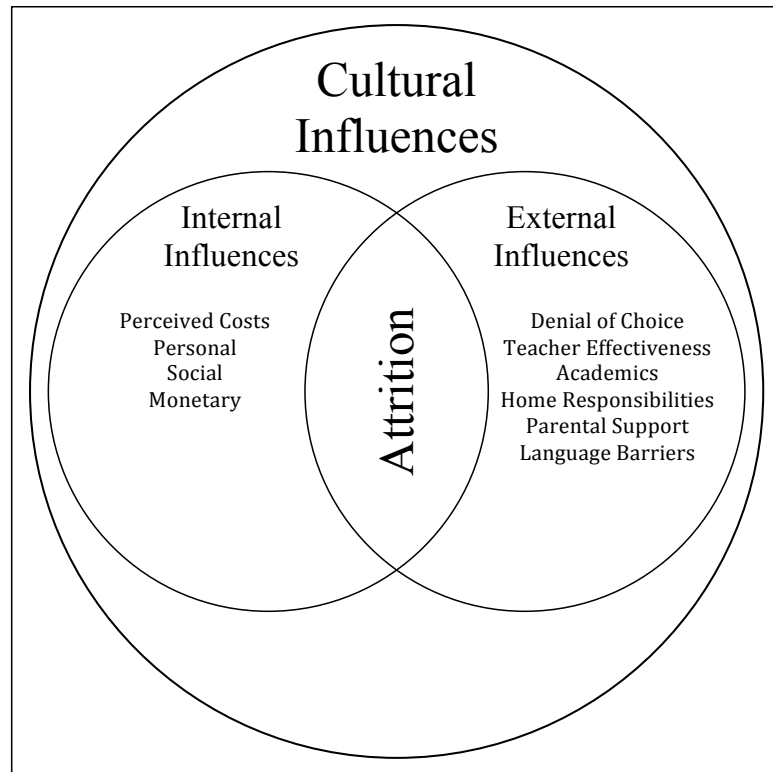


**Figure 5.1** Model of influences on Latino student attrition

Combining these findings with previous research, Figure 5.2 illustrates a model for student attrition as a whole, including the Latino culture. In this model, there are four influences not revealed in the present study: academics, home responsibilities, parental support, and



language barriers. These influences were deemed necessary and relevant to include in the figure based on their frequent occurrence in previous research.



**Figure 5.2** Model of influences on student attrition

Internal influences include the three costs revealed by the present study: social, personal, and monetary costs. These areas are explored in previous research to varying degrees but never fully fleshed out. Social costs to students revealed in the present study included instrument isolation, other students, and elective preference. Previous research has also found peer pressure (Borden, Perkins, Carleton-Hug, Stone, & Keith, 2006; Nierman & Veak, 1997; Rogers, 1989), and the influences of important people in a student's life (Marshall & Corenblum, 1998; Nierman & Veak, 1997) to be factors of social cost. All of these influences reflect the perception that there will be a negative social consequence to participating in a music ensemble for students.

These negative consequences could include negative peer or teacher interactions, or a loss in the ability to participate in other activities with important peers.

Personal costs from the present study included band being not enjoyable (Martignetti, 1965), instrument logistics, and effort (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Gamin, 2005; Martignetti, 1965). Additionally, instrument difficulty, fear of failure (Gamin, 2005; Martignetti, 1965), and poor progress on their instrument (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Rogers, 1989) have been reported by prior research to be predictors of attrition in instrumental music programs. Finally, prior research identified attitude towards music as a personal component to attrition in music ensemble classes (Albert, 2006; Marshall & Corenblum, 1998; Nierman & Veak, 1997). Personal costs dealing with instrument difficulty and fear of failure are partly related to effort, and poor progress on an instrument can further this perception to students.

Monetary costs to students were revealed to be the final, and perhaps most obvious, internal influence on students in the present study. Looking beyond these findings, prior research suggests two main components to this influence: that of socioeconomic status (Abril, 2011; Borden, Perkins, Carleton-Hug, Stone, & Keith, 2006; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Kinney, 2010, 2015; Klinedinst, 1991; Lorah, Sanders, & Morrison, 2014; Marshall and Corenblum, 1998; Moyer, 2010) and instrument source and condition (Moyer, 2010). The source of instrument was not directly discussed by participants in the present study as being an influence on students' decisions to continue in band. However, every participant in the present study indicated that they used a school instrument, and in some cases were not pleased with the condition of that instrument.

Two external influences were revealed in the present study, that of the denial of choice (Borden, Perkins, Carleton-Hug, Stone, and Keith, 2006; Callahan, Wilkinson & Muller, 2010;

Gamin, 2005; Lorah, Sanders, & Morrison, 2014; Rogers, 1989) and teacher effectiveness (Albert, 2006; Borden, Perkins, Carleton-Hug, Stone, & Keith 2006; Rogers 1989). The denial of choice category primarily reflects students being unable to take band due to scheduling conflicts with other classes such as special reading courses or English as a Secondary Language (ESL) classes. Teacher effectiveness deals with the relationship between the student and teacher as well as classroom management and teaching strategies.

Other external influences to attrition in instrumental music programs have been heavily documented in prior research. Academic performance has been found in prior research to be one of the external influences on attrition in instrumental music programs (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Gamin, 2005; Kinney, 2010, 2015; Klinedinst, 1991). Students with poor academics have been found participate in all activities at lower rates than their peers. This is often because poor academics lead to more required courses, such as remedial math or reading classes. Home responsibilities (Abril, 2003; Borden, Perkins, Carleton-Hug, Stone, & Keith, 2006; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007) and parental support (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Kinney, 2010, 2015; Marshall and Corenblum, 1998; Martignetti, 1965; Moyer, 2010; Nierman & Veak, 1997) have also been found to be predictors of student participation in ensemble classes. Finally, language barriers have been found in prior research to be an external influence on student attrition (Abril, 2003; Borden, Perkins, Carleton-Hug, Stone, & Keith, 2006; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007). This manifests itself in two ways. First, students are blocked from participation due to ESL class requirements, and second, directors demonstrate an inability to effectively communicate with students and parents.

While any one of these areas alone could heavily influence attrition, Culture carries an influence over them all. The present study focused on the Latino culture to begin developing a

model for what this particular ethnic group values. The present model suggests that non-Latino students may also be affected by these same influences to varying degrees. Across varying cultures some influences will be more impactful, some less, some the same.

The combinations of internal and external influences determine if a student will be able to, or will choose to, continue their participation in ensemble classes. If the perceived costs of participation are too high, students may choose not to participate. Similarly, if external influences appear to inhibit a student's ability to participate, they may choose not to participate whether they are given the opportunity or not. The combination of multiple influences increases the likelihood of a student not participating in an ensemble class after the first, or any, year of music instruction. Further research is desperately needed to test and ascertain the value of each of the internal and external influences as they combine with a student's cultural background.

### **Implications**

Learning an instrument for the first time is a unique and difficult experience for many students. In order to satisfy the second aim of this study, i.e. to identify patterns among the factors reported by students that could help elementary band directors to better serve their Latino populations, the researcher submits the following suggestions.

Effort, one of the personal costs found in the present study, plays an important role in student motivation. Staying motivated in any activity can be difficult for students when they do not see immediate success. Educators can assist students through this process by providing them with constructive criticisms when needed, and acknowledging their effort and successes. Educators should also provide students with the time and resources they need to be successful. Not every student will learn the same, and a 'one size fits all' method of teaching, which is

commonly found in band rooms, does not suffice. Educators should diversify their teaching strategies to meet the needs of all their students.

Unfortunately, students may sometimes select an instrument to learn that has certain logistics, which may then become barriers for the student. If the educator is knowledgeable of the tendencies and difficulties their students may face, they can better guide students to an appropriate instrument during the instrument selection process. If a student has a small stature, or appears to be intimidated by the complexities of an instrument, the educator should have the knowledge to steer that student's decision to a more appropriate instrument. If quality instruments are available, the educator should make an effort to provide students playing the larger instruments with an instrument they can keep at home and at school. It is completely appropriate during the first year of instruction for the educator to suggest an instrument switch for a student for which instrument logistics appear to be inhibiting success.

The vast number of new elective classes available to students when they enter middle school can also be difficult for music educators to overcome when trying to retain students from year-to-year. The best thing educators can do to address this issue is to be knowledgeable about the school schedule and the classes available to students on a year-to-year basis. In some cases, students will be able to enroll in the new classes they are interested in later during their middle school experience. Making students aware of these opportunities can help educators retain students during the middle school transition. Another barrier to incoming students can be a lack of beginning band classes at the middle school level. Unfortunately, if there is no beginning band class available in middle school it can be difficult for students who drop out to later rejoin the band. Encouraging your school to make beginning band available to students in middle school can help students find their way to music later in their schooling.

The social element in music ensemble classes can be what initially attracts and retains some students. Educators should make and develop positive relationships with their students, foster positive peer relationships, and create a positive classroom environment. Developing strong classroom management strategies will also help educators to control the possible influence negative behaviors have on students' decisions to continue participation in band after fifth-grade. With these steps in place educators create a safe and constructive environment, which will encourage students to continue on in band.

Music ensemble teachers may often be concerned with establishing a well-rounded and balanced instrumentation in beginning band. While this might appear beneficial from an educator's point of view, it can potentially leave students isolated on an instrument. The researcher instead suggests avoiding instances of student instrument isolation rather than starting a perfectly balanced beginning band. By focusing on instrument isolation as a primary concern within beginning band classes students will find more success learning their first instrument. With a more student-centered approach to instrumentation and instrument selection, educators give students more peer support and a greater chance at continuing on in band.

The theme of financial cost refers to one's ability to afford the renting or purchasing of an instrument and materials needed for band class. Unfortunately, music educators do not have any impact on the SES of their students. Educators should do their best to ensure that all necessary resources are available to students, regardless of SES. Educators cannot and should not assume that a student can provide all the necessary resources to participate in band. Music educators should therefore quickly and efficiently identify families that need assistance, and try to provide assistance where and when appropriate. Educators should also be wary of the tendency to provide students with used and/or subpar materials, most often in the case of school owned

instruments. This will not create a sense of pride and ownership for students, and in many cases, will be one of the contributing factors to their discontinuation in band. Instrument donation programs and scholarships for eligible students are two avenues educators can explore to supply students with quality materials. Furthermore, educators should be vigilant in cleaning and appropriately maintaining school instruments annually.

When obstacles to participation are out of the student's control, such as the case of alternative required classes or the denial of student choice, it is recommended that the band director become directly involved. Educators should be prepared to advocate, and encourage parents to advocate for students who wish to continue in band when obstacles arise. Educators should make sure students are fully informed about their options for middle school enrollment and what required courses they will be enrolled in. Being knowledgeable of these options will allow the educator to better help students through the enrollment process.

Academic achievement is one of the primary predictors of enrollment in music ensemble classes in prior research, and can be an important external influence for students. While educators do not always have direct impact on students' academic achievement, they can still have an influence on it. It is recommended that educators be involved with other disciplines within the school, and follow up with students who may be struggling in classes other than band. Music ensemble instructors are in a unique position to teach some of the same students year after year, and can have a positive impact academic achievement by staying involved with students through their academic achievements and struggles.

Language barriers can be common in today's communities and are a significant external barrier to retention. There are several ways in which the educator can overcome these challenges resulting from language barriers. Oftentimes if students are not fluent in English, there will be

other students in the class who are bilingual. Encouraging bilingual students to sit together with struggling students, and in some cases, play similar instruments, can be a great benefit to the educator and students alike. School districts frequently serving communities for which English is not the primary language often employ or subscribe to translation services. These can assist the educator in translating classroom materials and information to be sent home to parents. There are even services available allowing the educator to have a conference call with a parent and a translator. Making the effort to bridge language barriers can have a dramatic impact for both students and parents' dispositions towards music ensemble classes and the educator.

It will be difficult for the educator to control certain external influences on students' decisions to enroll in band after the first year. While having no control over a student's home responsibilities or parental support, there are measures the educator can take to mediate these effects. Ensuring positive and proactive communication practices with families will help educators to keep parents involved and informed of the importance music plays in their child's life. The educator can do this by sending out a monthly email or newsletter, calling families to inform them of the students' successes, and even being visible at school functions such as back to school nights or conferences.

Unlike the aforementioned influences on student retention, music educators must accept full responsibility for their own effectiveness in the classroom. Teacher effectiveness is a crucial component to student retention. If students feel the teacher is not effective or has poor classroom management skills, they may not want to continue in the class. It is recommended that the teacher seek out professional development opportunities, and continue to reflect on their practices in the classroom. Asking a colleague or supervisor to observe lessons can provide



invaluable feedback for the educator to improve their classroom management and teaching strategies.

Finally, some students will simply not find band to be enjoyable. This may be for a variety of reasons, some of which are mentioned above and some of which will be out of the director's control. Implementing some or all of these suggestions may help educators to create a positive experience for all students in their band classes, and should increase student retention among the Latino population.

### **Limitations**

The present research presents a model for student attrition not found in prior research. This model should be used to inform future research and expand music educator's understanding of attrition. There are a few limitations to be acknowledged in the present study.

The foremost limitation of the current study is the size of the sample. While the responses of participants in this study are important, they represent the views of only ten participants from a school district with 36 elementary schools. It also should be noted that two of the ten participants were students of the primary researcher during their fifth-grade year. As the researcher led the focus group interviews, this relationship may have had an influence on participant responses. Another prominent limitation to the study is that of time. The researcher was allowed approximately 25 minutes for student focus groups during the end of the school day, instead of the preferred minimum of 30 to 45 minutes. A final limitation to this study was the number of participating schools. Due to time constraints, only one school was able to participate in the study. Having only one middle-school community participate in the research may have had a notable impact on the results obtained from participants.

## **Future Research**

Future research is highly recommended concerning the retention of students in band programs across the country, but especially as relates to the Latino student population. A duplication of the current study with a larger pool of participants would fill a current gap in the literature on the retention rates of Latino students. It is recommended that future research duplicating the current study pull participants from different schools together to participate in focus groups, rather than utilizing participants from the same building in each group. This will aid with some of the distractions that occurred during the focus group sessions. Furthermore, a longer time for focus groups is recommended for future studies. Focus groups for this study lasted approximately twenty minutes, which was far too short a time frame to properly address all necessary topics and questions. Participants were still focused and had plenty more to say by the end of each session. Extending focus group time to 30 or 45 minutes for a future study would be more than appropriate.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – IRB Approval Letter



#### APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL

March 3, 2016

Jacob Wilson  
j968w847@ku.edu

Dear Jacob Wilson:

On 3/3/2016, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Factors Identified by Sixth Grade Latino Students for Their Discontinuation in Band After the First Year
Investigator:	Jacob Wilson
IRB ID:	STUDY00003737
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Olathe Research Approval.pdf, • Parent-Guardian Consent.doc, • HSCL-NewSubmission-Form-V3.pdf, • Assent Procedure Minors.doc, • Recruitment Form Minors.doc, • Focus Group Questions.docx

The IRB approved the submission from 3/3/2016 to 3/2/2017.

1. Before 3/2/2017 submit a Continuing Review request and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.
2. Any significant change to the protocol requires a modification approval prior to altering the project.
3. Notify HSCL about any new investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take the online tutorial at [https://rgs.drupal.ku.edu/human\\_subjects\\_compliance\\_training](https://rgs.drupal.ku.edu/human_subjects_compliance_training).
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 3/2/2017 approval of this protocol expires on that date.

Please note university data security and handling requirements for your project:  
<https://documents.ku.edu/policies/IT/DataClassificationandHandlingProceduresGuide.htm>

You must use the final, watermarked version of the consent form, available under the "Documents" tab in eCompliance.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Dyson Elms, MPA  
IRB Administrator, KU Lawrence Campus

Human Subjects Committee Lawrence  
Youngberg Hall | 2385 Irving Hill Road | Lawrence, KS 66045-7568 | (785) 864-7429 | [www.research.ku.edu](http://www.research.ku.edu)

## Appendix B – School Participation Request

Research Request at Oregon Trail

Good Evening, Dr. Hawks.

My name is Jacob Wilson, and I am an elementary band instructor in the Olathe School District. In pursuance of my master's degree in music education at the University of Kansas, and am writing a thesis on the factors Latino students attribute to their decision to discontinue enrolling in sixth-grade band. To do this, I plan to conduct several focus groups of sixth-grade students who participated in band in their fifth-grade year but are not participating this year. Questions will focus on the reasons students choose not to enroll or are otherwise unable to enroll in music ensembles. The focus groups will consist of 4-6 students and last no longer than one class period during the school day.

The KU Internal Review Board for Human Subjects Research, and the Olathe Public School District, has approved the study, and I am requesting your permission to commence data collection at your school. If amenable, I only need a couple things from you in order to begin collecting data after spring break: 1) Student and class enrollment data in order to determine what students qualify. 2) A time to pull students for a 30-40 minute focus group. 3) A time to meet with students for 5-10 minutes to explain the study and send home consent forms. 4) A small meeting room or classroom to hold focus groups in.

I am also asking Indian Trail and Santa Fe Trail to participate in this study in hopes that there will be enough students to have 1 or 2 focus groups at each school.

Please let me know who you would like me to contact to begin organizing this, and let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Jacob M. Dakon, if you have any questions.

Jacob M. Dakon, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Music Education  
University of Kansas, School of Music  
[jmdakon@ku.edu](mailto:jmdakon@ku.edu)  
785-864-4518

Best Regards,

Jacob Wilson

Jacob Wilson  
[jwilsonwl@olatheschools.org](mailto:jwilsonwl@olatheschools.org)  
(913) 244-1312

*Elementary Band Director  
Brougham, Countryside, Woodland, Northview,  
Tomahawk, Heatherstone, Regency Place, Ridgeview*

## **Appendix C – Recruitment Form (Minors)**

### **RECRUITMENT FORM (MINORS):**

#### **“Factors Identified by Sixth-Grade Latino Students for Their Discontinuation in Band After the First Year”**

**Jacob B. Wilson, Principle Investigator**  
**Jacob M. Dakon, Ph.D., Advisor**

(A meeting will be scheduled with for qualifying students during the school day)

“My name is Jacob Wilson, I am a student at the University of Kansas and a teacher in the Olathe School District. I am interested in finding out the reasons you feel affected your decisions not to participate in band in sixth grade, so I would like you to take part in an experiment. The experiment requires 40 to 45 minutes of your time here at school and will take place during one of your class periods. You will participate in a group discussion in which I will ask you questions and give you topics to discuss. Your responses will only be used in this study and you will remain anonymous. This means that you, the other participants in your group, and I will be the only ones who hear your responses. No one else will have access to this information, not even the school. If you don't feel like participating in this experiment or the interview, you don't have to; the choice is yours. You may also quit at anytime throughout the experiment without penalty. If you would like to participate in this experiment, all you need to do is return your parental consent form to your teacher or me signed by the due date. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have now or when we are meet together later. Does anyone have any questions for me?”

(Take any questions the students have)

(Pass out Parent-Guardian Consent form)

(Students return to class)

## **Appendix D – Parent-Guardian Consent**

### **PARENT-GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT**

#### **“Factors Identified by Sixth Grade Latino Students for Their Discontinuation in Band After the First Year”**

**Jacob B. Wilson, Principle Investigator**

**Jacob M. Dakon, Ph.D., Advisor**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Music Education and Music Therapy at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish your child to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not allow your child to participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to allow your child to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw your child from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to determine what reasons sixth-grade Latino students attribute to their decisions not to enroll in band after participating in band during their fifth-grade year.

#### **PROCEDURES**

Students participating in the study will be assigned to small groups in which they will participate in focus group interviews. In these interviews students will reflect on and discuss various aspects relating to their decisions to not participate in sixth-grade band. Their discussion will be lead by the primary investigator who will provide the group with question prompts and ensure that all students are able to participate in the discussion. All experimentation will occur in your child’s middle school. The session should take 40-45 minutes.

The methodology is as follows. All participants will gather at the appointed time and designated location in their middle school. Students will sit down around a table. The primary investigator will turn on the audio recorder and begin a brief introduction about the study. The primary investigator will then begin the focus group interview. Upon the conclusion of the focus group the primary investigator will turn off the audio recorder.

#### **RISKS**

There is minimal physical or psychological risk involved in this study. By definition, this means that a subject will encounter no greater probability of harm or discomfort than he or she would ordinarily encounter in daily life. There are also no legal or economic risks involved in the participation of this study.

#### BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits to students; however, by participating in this study, your child will play an important role in helping the investigator understand the influences students associate for their discontinuation in band classes. The goal of this study is to provide a base of information to be used to conduct further research on the reasons students discontinue participation in band classes.

#### PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

No payment or incentives will be offered to students or parents in return for participation in the present study.

#### PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child's name will not be associated with any data collected, much less used in any publication or presentation of the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher will use a pseudonym in place of your child's name. Your child's identifiable information will not be shared unless required by law or unless you give written permission.

All audio recordings and files will be stored in a secure location by the primary investigator. Only the primary investigator will have immediate access to these records. For reliability purposes, an expert evaluator will be asked to analyze transcripts of the audio recordings. All audio recordings and files will be destroyed once the study has been completed.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your child's information, excluding your child's name, for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

#### REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, your child cannot participate in this study.

#### CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to allow participation of your child in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about your child, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to:

Jacob M. Dakon, Ph.D.  
Music Education & Music Therapy Department  
University of Kansas School of Music  
Murphy Hall, 1530 Naismith Drive, Office 320  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045-3103

Jacob B. Wilson  
Principal Investigator  
9134 W. 75<sup>th</sup> Ter.  
Overland Park, Kansas 66204

If you cancel permission to use your child's information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about your child. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

#### PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my child's rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429, write to the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email [irb@ku.edu](mailto:irb@ku.edu).

I agree to allow my child to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_____ Type/Print Participant's Name	_____ Date
_____ Parent/Guardian Signature	_____ Relation to Participant

#### Researcher Contact Information

Jacob B. Wilson  
Principal Investigator  
9134 W. 75<sup>th</sup> Ter.  
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Email: [j968w847@ku.edu](mailto:j968w847@ku.edu)  
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Phone: 785-864-4518



## **Appendix E – Assent Procedure (Minors)**

### **ASSENT FORM (MINORS):**

#### **“Factors Identified by Sixth-Grade Latino Students for Their Discontinuation in Band After the First Year”**

**Jacob B. Wilson, Principle Investigator**  
**Jacob M. Dakon, Ph.D., Advisor**

“My name is Jacob Wilson and I would like to ask you a couple of questions about your decision to not participate in band in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Does everyone feel completely comfortable speaking in English?”

Confirm that a translator is not needed, or that students can translate for each other.

“I would like to interview you to find out what you feel are the reasons you chose not to participate in band this year. The interview will last 40 to 45 minutes. Feel free to talk as much as you would like about each of the topics. The more information you can provide me with, the better. I may ask you to provide me with more information or to clarify something you say, or I might ask your options on what another student has said or if you have not had an opportunity to speak. I will be recording our discussion to make sure I don’t miss anything, but your responses will only be used in this study and you will remain anonymous. This means that you, the other participants in your group, and I will be the only ones who hear your responses. If you don't feel like participating in this experiment or the interview, you don't have to; the choice is yours. You may also quit at anytime throughout the experiment without penalty. Do you consent to participate in this interview?”

(Verbal Consent)

[If yes] I’m going to turn on the recorder and we will start.

[If no] Thank you for your time today you may go back to your classroom.

## **Appendix F – Focus Group Questions**

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

#### **“Factors Identified by Sixth Grade Latino Students for Their Discontinuation in Band After the First Year”**

**Jacob B. Wilson, Principle Investigator  
Jacob M. Dakon, Ph.D., Advisor**

When students arrive in room the focus group is to be held in the PI will read the Assent Procedure.

After confirming the participation of all students, students will make name tents that include their name, the instrument they played in fifth-grade band, and the name of the elementary school they attended.

Once all participants are finished writing.

“We will start by sharing the information on our name tents with the group. We can start on the left end of the table.”

After all students have shared the name tent information begin with the first question.

1. Think back to your experience in band in fifth-grade. What were some things you liked about band?
2. What were some things you disliked about band?
3. If you could have changed one thing about band in fifth-grade, what would it be?
4. What are some reasons you think Latino students don’t continue in band after fifth-grade?
5. What are the reasons you didn’t continue in band after fifth-grade?
6. If you had to pick three reasons why Latino students don’t continue in band after fifth-grade based on our discussion, what would they be?

Following the last student’s response to the final question the PI will summarize the main themes that came up during the discussion.

“Thank you for participating in our study, you may return to your classroom. Have a nice day.”

Students return to class.

## Appendix G – Olathe Research Approval

5/21/2017

Mail - jbwilson@olatheschools.org

### Research Project - Factors Identified by Sixth Grade Latino Students for Their Discontinuation in Band After the First Year

**Teresa Eddy**

Wed 2/24/2016 11:29 AM

Thesis

To: Jacob Wilson <jwilsonwl@olatheschools.org>;

Cc: Deborah Chappell <dchappellirc@olatheschools.org>; Jessica Dain <jdaine@olatheschools.org>;

Congratulations on the approval of your research project, and the following criteria will be:

- The research project goals are aligned with the district and building improvement goals.
- A summary report should be submitted following the completion of your research project. Please submit this report to me at [teddyirc@olatheschools.org](mailto:teddyirc@olatheschools.org).

We look forward to working with you throughout your project. If you should have any questions or require assistance, please contact me at 780-7355.

**Teresa Eddy**

Administrative Secretary PE/Health Coordinator  
Assisting FLIP Program & Grants/Research  
Instructional Resource Center  
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